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**Abstract**

Research into differentiation and profiling of knowledge producing institutions through the lenses of institutional logics and field embeddedness have proliferated in recent years. By discussing this process in the context of research groups, as those basic units in which knowledge production epistemically and practically takes place, this article offers a contribution to the theoretical discussion on organisational differentiation. Based on a small-N comparative case study of research groups operating in different national and organisational contexts on a single, highly competitive and interdisciplinary applied sciences field, nanosciences, the article proposes research group profiles as heuristic devices to explore both the embeddedness and strategic agency of research groups.forschungsf (HRK / Abstract übernommen)